

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (*Currently Amended*) An e-commerce brokering method for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and a buyer via a digital data communication network, comprising the steps of:

storing public data and non-public data in a database of an agent, said public data containing standardized attribute information about a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers, said public data able to be viewed so as to compare the attribute information of each supplier's product, said non-public data comprising sets of transaction rules ~~set~~ for each combination of a supplier and the buyer, wherein at least one set of said transaction rules is established by a respective combination of supplier and buyer prior to the buyer's selection of a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers;

applying to the agent for a transaction of a selected product, wherein the buyer selects a product from said database via said data communication network;

if the buyer has applied for a transaction, said agent reads the transaction rules set applicable to the combination of buyer and supplier of the selected product from said non-public data, prepares cost estimates and presents the cost estimates to the buyer; and

selecting a supplier and purchase conditions, wherein the buyer selects a supplier on the basis of the cost estimate and said agent carries out an ordering procedure on the basis of the purchase conditions.

2. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 1, wherein said database stores conversion data indicating correspondence between code systems of different suppliers, wherein the code system of each supplier comprises customer codes and product part numbers.

3. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 2, wherein product information to be transmitted from the agent to the buyer and the supplier is converted to information in code systems, each corresponding to the buyer or the supplier on the basis of the conversion data.

4. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 1, wherein the buyer can view said public data cost-free.

5. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 1, wherein the supplier registers, updates, maintains and administers said public data stored in said database.

6. (*Previously Presented*) The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 1, wherein the agent stores an unalterable record of the ordering procedures in a storage means.

7. (*Currently Amended*) The e-commerce brokering method for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and buyers via a digital data communication network, comprising the steps of:

storing public data and non-public data in a database of an agent, said public data containing standardized attribute information about a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers, said public data able to be viewed so as to compare the attribute information of each supplier's product, said non-public data comprising sets of transaction rules ~~set~~ for each combination of a supplier and the buyer, wherein at least one set of said transaction rules is established by a respective combination of supplier and buyer prior to the buyer's selection of a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers;

applying to the agent for a transaction of a selected product, wherein the buyer selects a product from said database via said data communication network;

if the buyer has applied for a transaction, said agent reads the transaction rules set applicable to the combination of buyer and supplier of the selected product from said non-public data, prepares cost estimates, and presents the cost estimates to the buyer;

starting negotiations with the suppliers on the basis of the cost estimate to determine purchase conditions and a supplier; and

ordering the selected product, wherein said agent carries out ordering procedures for the buyer and the supplier on the basis of the negotiated purchase conditions .

8. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 7, wherein the purchase conditions stored in the non-public data are replaced by the negotiated purchase conditions.

9. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 7, wherein said database for the agent stores conversion data indicating correspondence between code systems of different suppliers, the code system of each supplier comprises customer codes and product part numbers.

10. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 9, wherein product information to be transmitted from the agent to the buyer and the supplier is converted to information in code systems, each corresponding to the buyer or the supplier on the basis of the conversion data.

11. *(Previously Presented)* The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 7, wherein the buyer can view said public data cost-free.

12. (*Previously Presented*) The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 7, wherein the supplier registers, updates, maintains and administers said public data stored in said database.

13. (*Previously Presented*) The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 7, wherein the buyer determines a supplier and purchase conditions via bidding conducted by the agent, individual negotiations, or an auction with the suppliers of the same products or services.

14. (*Previously Presented*) The e-commerce brokering method according to claim 7, wherein the agent stores an unalterable record of the ordering procedures in a storage means.

15. (*Currently Amended*) An e-commerce brokering system for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and a buyer via a digital data communication network, comprising:

a database for storing public data and non-public data, the public data able to be viewed by standardizing attribute information about the same products supplied by the plurality of suppliers so as to compare the attribute information of the products, and the non-public data comprising sets of transaction rules set for each combination of a supplier and the buyer, wherein at least one set of said transaction rules is established by a respective combination of supplier and buyer prior to the buyer's selection of a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers;

a supplier site computer connected to said digital data communication network;

a buyer site computer connected to said digital data communication network; and
an agent site computer connected to said digital data communication network, wherein
said agent site computer delivers said public data to said buyer site computer, makes cost
estimates on the basis of the transaction rules set applicable to the combination of buyer and
supplier of a desired product read said non-public data in response to an application for
negotiations for the desired product selected from the buyer site computer, and carries out
ordering procedures for the selected product.

16. *(Previously Presented)* A database for use in an e-commerce brokering method
according to claim 1, wherein the database stores public data able to be viewed by standardizing
attribute information about the same products supplied by the plurality of suppliers so as to
compare the attribute information with each other.

17. *(Previously Presented)* The database according to claim 16, wherein the database
further stores conversion data indicating correspondence between supplier code systems
comprising customer codes varying according to a supplier and product part numbers.

18. *(Previously Presented)* A database for use in an e-commerce brokering method
according to claim 7, wherein the database stores public data able to be viewed by standardizing
attribute information about the same products supplied by the plurality of suppliers so as to
compare the attribute information with each other.

19. (*Previously Presented*) The database according to claim 18, wherein the database further stores conversion data indicating correspondence between supplier code systems comprising customer codes varying according to a supplier and product part numbers.

20. (*Currently Amended*) An e-commerce brokering method for mediating commerce between a plurality of suppliers and buyers via a digital data communication network, comprising the steps of:

providing a database that stores public data and non-public data, said public data comprising standardized attribute information about the same kind of products supplied from the plurality of suppliers, and said non-public data comprising sets of transaction rules set for each combination of a supplier and a buyer, wherein at least one set of said transaction rules is established by a respective combination of supplier and buyer prior to the buyer's selection of a product supplied by the plurality of suppliers;

presenting said public data to a buyer site computer via digital data communication network so that a buyer can compare a performance and price of the same kind of product of different suppliers to select a supplier supplying a desired product;

receiving an application from the buyer site computer via the digital data communication network, the application being for transaction of the desired product of the selected supplier;

reading the transaction rules ~~rule~~-set for the combination of buyer and the selected supplier from said database, and making a cost estimate to send to the buyer site computer;

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receiving a decision from the buyer site computer via the digital data communication network, said decision containing a supplier from which the buyer purchases the desired product and purchase conditions determined on the basis of the cost estimate; and

conducting ordering procedures for the buyer and the supplier on the basis of the purchase condition.